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Programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001

Questions relating to information

Development of an international radio broadcasting capacity for the United Nations

Programme budget implications of draft resolution B, contained in document A/56/21/Add.1

Statement submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly

1. The Committee on Information, at its resumed twenty-third session held from 5 to 7 September 2001, considered the final report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the pilot project on the development of an international radio broadcasting capacity for the United Nations (A/AC.198/2001/10). The present report is submitted in accordance with the request that the Secretary-General convey the necessary justification of the resource requirements, including information on the possibility of extrabudgetary financing and/or the redeployment of resources, concerning the expansion of the international radio broadcasting capacity for the 2002-2003 biennium for consideration by the relevant committees of the General Assembly.[1]

I. Requests contained in the draft resolution

2. At its resumed twenty-third session, the Committee on Information recommended for adoption by the General Assembly draft resolution B, on United Nations public information policies and activities.[2] By operative paragraphs 47 and 49 of the draft resolution, the Assembly would:

(a) Decide, building upon the success of the pilot project as well as the scope of its programme distribution and established partnerships, to expand the

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international radio broadcasting capacity of the United Nations in all six official languages;

(b) Request the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of the United Nations international radio broadcasting capacity to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fifth session, including information that can be obtained from the local, national and regional radio partners about the estimated number of listeners reached, in order for the Committee to decide on the future of this capacity.

II. Relationship of the request to the programme of work

3. The activities referred to above would fall under programme 23, Public information, of the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005. In the absence of a legislative mandate, provision has not been made in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 for the continuation and expansion of the international radio broadcasting capacity of the United Nations.

III. Activities by which the request would be implemented

4. Under the proposal, the United Nations would continue to produce in the six official languages 15-minute programmes which consist of news, background information and reports about peacekeeping, humanitarian and other activities of the United Nations system.

IV. Modifications required in the programme of work for 2002-2003

5. No provision has been made in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 for the continuation of radio project, given the absence of a legislative mandate on the project beyond the pilot phase. Consequently, provisions for the related requirements would have to be made under section 26, Public information, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003.

V. Additional requirements for the period from 1 January 2002 to 31 December 2003

6. Section 26, Public information, of the regular budget would need to be supplemented by established posts ($2.0 million), special services contracts ($0.4 million) and other related costs ($0.3 million). Consequently, provisions for the related requirements in the amount of $2.7 million would have to be made for the biennium 2002-2003.

A. Supplementary staffing ($2.0 million)

7. The Department of Public Information would require 17 temporary new posts for producers, executive producers, research assistants, planners and General

Service staff, at a cost of $2.0 million using the standard costs applicable for new posts.

1. Producers/associate producers ($1.1 million)

8. It is estimated that nine additional radio producers/associate producers would be required in order to ensure parity across all language units, with at least four producers for each language to maintain a daily 15-minute current affairs broadcast, five days a week, including holidays. Radio producers are expected to research, write, produce and narrate radio news, features and documentary programmes on the global activities of the United Nations system. They are also expected to liaise with broadcasting organizations so as to promote United Nations radio programmes and devise feedback mechanisms on the quality and content of the programmes. Five of the requested nine additional staff will be at the P-2 level and four at the P-3 level.

2. Executive Producer and News Director ($0.3 million)

9. Two staff at the P-4 level would be required for the positions of the Executive Producer and News Director to provide daily editorial guidance to all producers vis-à-vis the content and substance of all programmes, ensuring that all issues reported are factual, accurate, timely and politically objective. In this process, they are expected to guide producers in creating and crafting lively and interesting programmes that reflect a balanced cross-section of views on any particular issue.

3. Research assistants and planners ($0.6 million)

10. One staff member at the P-1/P-2 level will be responsible for the management of the web pages of United Nations Radio in the six official languages, and for encoding, posting of the daily programmes and monitoring of feedback. A second officer at the P-1/P-2 level would research written and audio excerpts from various sources, assist programme production and, when required, prepare written contributions for the live broadcast programmes.

11. Four General Service level incumbents will be required to assist with radio production by researching written and audio excerpts from various sources, liaising with source persons for interviews and evaluating the audio quality of recordings. They are expected to assist with programme production by scheduling studio time, editing inserts and other recorded components, participating in narration and directing studio production.

B. Special service contracts ($0.4 million)

1. Telecommunications Engineer ($250,000)

12. A Telecommunications Engineer is needed to augment the existing radio engineering staff in the production and dissemination of the live broadcasts.

2. Field production: stringers' fees ($150,000)

13. Officers of United Nations Radio are often not able to travel to various regions of the world to gather and collect radio material for their programmes, except when they cover international conferences. Therefore, it is necessary and financially efficient for United Nations Radio to commission field stringers and/or freelancers

to produce 3-15 minute packages that highlight the voices of actual people and of beneficiaries of programmes supported by the United Nations.

C. Other related costs ($0.3 million)

1. Promotion, feedback and project evaluation ($150,000)

14. Other than the substantive radio programme production activities, outreach activities will be planned for the biennium 2002-2003. In order to monitor and analyse audience response, promotional activities and project evaluation will be undertaken. Promotional activities will include such promotions as flyers, brochures, compact discs with audio samples, advertisements in broadcasting journals and telecommunications with broadcasting organizations. Data will be collected for enlargement of the client base and FTP deliveries. Industry surveys, as well as feedback analysis with specialists working with the radio broadcasting community and industry, will be also conducted.

2. Technical maintenance of equipment ($50,000)

15. The audio management system, with radio editing on the desktop, is a valuable and complex piece of equipment. Maintenance of such equipment will be essential. The budget for this item also includes resources for the purchase of two new computers, six printers and maintenance of equipment.

3. Upgrading of the International Broadcast Centre ($100,000)

16. Many broadcasters receive live programmes via the International Broadcast Centre. The Centre is the feed facility for radio transmissions that leave Headquarters via the telephone and ISDN radio circuits. The capacity for simultaneous transmission must be increased so as to ensure high-quality reception of United Nations Radio broadcasting. This will be done by replacing the present equipment with equipment that is able to meet the increased demand. Together with the requirements mentioned above, the total estimated costs for the radio project would amount to $2.7 million.

VI. Potential for absorption

17. The resources required to implement the proposals cannot be covered from within the overall resources requested under section 26, Public information, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003.

VII. Contingency fund

18. It will be recalled that, under the procedure established by the General Assembly in resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986, which in effect started with the biennium 1990-1991, a contingency fund is established for each biennium to accommodate additional expenditures derived from legislative mandates not provided for in the programme budget. Under the same procedure, if the required additional expenditures exceed the resources available from the contingency fund, the proposed activities can be implemented only through redeployment of resources

from low-priority areas or modification of projected activities. Otherwise, such activities will have to be deferred until a subsequent biennium. A consolidated statement of all programme budget implications and revised estimates will be submitted to the Assembly towards the end of its current session.

VIII. Action required by the General Assembly

19. Accordingly, should the General Assembly adopt draft resolution B,[2] an estimated additional appropriation of $2.7 million would be required in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 21 A* (A/56/21/Add.1), draft resolution B, para. 48.

[2] See ibid., para. 9.